

## Challenges for Change Child Care Referral and Financial Assistance System

### EMERGING AGREEMENT: MODERNIZATION

**Mandate:** consider the impacts of implementing modernization of eligibility for CC Financial Assistance in the DCF system on families and CC providers; make recommendations to the legislature on how to preserve full access to high quality child development services for Vermont families, especially those experiencing adversity or barriers.

#### Key Questions:

1. What are the implications of modernization of eligibility on access to child care financial assistance for families and for child care providers?
2. What local supports would be needed to implement and manage the system and preserve full access to services?

#### Stakeholder Goals for Modernization

- Increase family access to multiple resources
- Improve flow of information to speed eligibility approval & payment to providers
- Stabilize system for providers
- Support human element for families in accessing information and eligibility
- Allow eligibility determination for child care even if other ESD benefits are not approved  
[\[Not sure if this is needed as federal CC-FAP rules require this to happen, cannot disallow the child care benefit if eligible even if family not eligible for other ESD benefits - KP\]](#)
- Give parents tools to self-navigate
- Maintain caution re: confidentiality via community supports
- Maintain some ability for face to face

#### Primary Stakeholder Concerns

*The stakes are high for families and providers if there is a delay in eligibility determination. The following are the key concerns related to the impending change. Suggestions can be found in the next section.*

**Capacity** – Stakeholders are concerned that a decreased number of staff designated for eligibility determination will increase delay in reimbursement for child care providers that provide care for families determined eligible. A delay in payment puts the child care provider at risk and could potentially decrease the number of providers willing and/or able to provide child care for children/families with child care financial assistance. These families and children would then have fewer options/choices for child care.

**Consistency** – In the current proposal, the Childhood Development Division (CDD) will remain the primary contact and support for child care providers. The Economic Services Division (ESD)

will serve as the primary contact and support to parents. The interface and exchange of information between these two systems is essential. Consistency in the interpretation and implementation of policy will be critical. The communications loop between CDD, ESD, providers and families needs to be closed.

***Continuity of relationships*** – For many families and providers, the ability to maintain a relationship with individuals responsible for eligibility determination is critical. This is especially true for vulnerable families, e.g., families request assistance in compiling necessary information to complete applications. Stakeholders urged the opportunity for personal connect between provider and eligibility determination worker. For example, alerts to the provider regarding the status of application would enable the provider to follow up with family. Additionally, stakeholders want a consistent person who handles eligibility for a particular family.

### **Stakeholder Suggestions/Recommendations:**

#### ***Overall policy and supports***

- Consider postponing transition until the modernized system is able to handle existing caseload
- Clarify standard for application process and timeline for eligibility determination
- Standardize data needed and policies across benefits including: income verification criteria and process, renewal dates, policies related to FAP, Reach UP, 3 Squares, health care assistances, and household size.
- Provide guidance on methods for increase completion of application that are consistently deficient

#### ***For providers***

- Allow personal connect between provider and eligibility determination worker
- Create consent form to share with families to access information from ESD
- Alert provider regarding status of application to enable providers to follow up with family as needed to expedite the eligibility process
- Track payment history by individual child
- Track by family name rather than document #
- Provide guidance on ways to support families in transition if they don't meet eligibility

#### ***For families***

- Create tools for parents to self-navigate and understand what's happening, where and how to get information to navigate the new system (tutorials, libraries, brochures)
- Enable communication beyond written notice; calls are important – especially hard to reach families, e.g., families who are homeless or families who need individualized communication, e.g., families with low literacy levels
- Provide translation, interpretation services and literacy support